



# National Child Care Information Center

*A service of the Child Care Bureau*

NCCIC

10530 Rosehaven Street, Suite 400

Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Phone: 800-616-2242 Fax: 800-716-2242 TTY: 800-516-2242

World Wide Web: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov>

## CHILD CARE TERMINOLOGY

The terms “[day care](#)” and “[child care](#)” are often used interchangeably to describe the regular, supervised, and paid care and education of children from birth to age 13 years outside children’s home while parents are at work, at school, or in training. Such care is available to parents during work hours and throughout the year. The following is a discussion of various terms related to child care, examples that show the transition from the term “day care” to “child care,” and a table with definitions of the terms used in the discussion.

### TERMS RELATED to CHILD CARE

During the 1970s and 1980s, a transition from use of the term “day care” to use of the term “child care” took place in the early childhood education field. By the early 1990s, “child care” was in common usage by early care and education professionals. The term “child care” emphasizes caring for a child and not on the time of day when care is provided. It also distinguishes the care of children from care for adults, which is also known as day care. “Child care” also recognizes that some parents, who work [nontraditional hours](#), need care for their children outside of the 6:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. timeframe.

Child care can be provided at a variety of sites, including [child care centers](#), public schools, [family child care](#) and [group homes](#), the homes of [families and friends and neighbors](#), and the [in a child’s home](#). Most programs that care for more than a certain number of children are required to be [licensed](#) or regulated.

Child care programs are often designed for specific age groups. The most common categories are [infant and toddler care](#) for children younger than 3 years, [preschool](#) programs for children from 3 years until kindergarten, and [school-age child care](#) provided before and after school, during summers, and on school holidays for children from kindergarten to age 13 years (also known after-school care and out-of-school time care).

Child care is different than [babysitting](#). Generally, babysitting is provided in a child’s home on a short-term, intermittent basis. The primary purpose of babysitting is to keep children safe. Babysitting does not have the learning component that is integral to child care, and is not regulated like out-of-home child care.

All child care should include a planned program that addresses children’s social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development. Child care should provide a schedules program, and supervision that responds to each child’s developmental needs, interests, and behavior.

All early education does not take place in child care programs. [Preschools](#), [nursery schools](#), [prekindergarten programs](#), and many [Head Start](#) programs have traditionally served 3- and 4-year-old children in [part-day](#) or full-school-day education programs that follow the academic calendar. These programs do not necessarily provide care for children during the parents' full work hours.

## **TRANSITION of TERMINOLOGY from DAY CARE to CHILD CARE**

The following historical information is a sampling that illustrates the use of the term “day care” and “child care” from the 1950’s to the 1990’s.

- In 1958, the Inter-City Day Care Council in New York City became the National Committee for the Day Care of Children. In 1968, it became the Day Care and Child Development Council. In 1982, it became the Child Care Action Campaign.
- In November 1960, the National Conference on the Day Care of Children helped to place day care on the national agenda.
- In 1968, the Federal Day Care Requirements were promulgated, but were never implemented.
- In 1972, the National Council of Jewish Women published *Windows on Day Care*. In 1999, the Nation Council of Jewish Women published *Opening a New Window on Child Care: A Report on the Status of Child Care in the Nation Today*.
- In 1972, the Office of Child Development in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare established a School-Age Day Care Task Force.
- In 1977, *Child Care Information Exchange*, a journal for center directors, was created.
- In 1979, *Children at the Center: Final Results of the National Day Care Study*, was published.
- In 1982, The National Association for Family Day Care was established. By 1994, it was the National Association for Family Child Care.
- In 1982, the National Coalition for Campus Child Care was incorporated.
- In 1984, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published the “Results of the NAEYC Survey of Child Care and Working Conditions” in *Young Children*, NAEYC’s bi-monthly journal.
- In 1986, the Temporary Child Care for Handicapped Children and Crisis Nurseries Act (P.L. 99-401) was passed.
- In 1986, Federal legislation, the Act for Better Child Care, to subsidize child care for low-income families was proposed.
- In 1987, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies was incorporated.
- In 1987, 90 organizations formed the national Alliance for Better Child Care.

- In 1989, the *National Child Care Staffing Study* was published by the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force.
- In 1990, *Who Cares for America's Children*, by the Panel on Child Care Policy, National Research Council, was presented to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The term “child care” was used throughout, except for a reference to family day care systems.
- In 1990, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act was created by the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1990.
- In 1995, the Child Care Bureau was established within the Administration for Children and Youth in HHS.
- In 1995, the National Child Care Information Center was established as a service of the Child Care Bureau.
- In 1997, a White House Conference on Child Care was convened.

## DEFINITIONS

The following table provides definitions for the terms that are used in the discussion of day care and child care. Some of these terms are from a specific early care and education resource and are cited accordingly.

After-school child care	Child care programs provided before and after school, during summers and on school holidays for children from kindergarten to age 13. Programs are also referred to as school-age child care. *
Babysitting	Care provided in a child's home on a short-term, intermittent basis. The primary purpose of babysitting is to keep children safe. Babysitting does not have the learning component that is integral to child care, and is not regulated like out-of-home child care.
Child care center	A center licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a non-residential setting, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parents' work.*
Child care	Regular, supervised, and paid care and education of children from birth to age 13 years outside of the child's home while their parents are at work, at school, or in training. It is available to parents during work hours and throughout the year.
Day care	Regular, supervised, and paid care and education of children from birth to age 13 years outside of the child's home while their parents are at work, at school, or in training. It is available to parents during work hours and throughout the year.  Regular, supervised, and paid care and education of adults outside of their homes. It is generally available during work hours and throughout the year.

Family child care	<p>An individual who provides child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child, as the sole caregiver, in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parents' work.*</p> <p>Additional information is available in the document, <i>Definition of Licensed Family Child Care Homes</i>, in the Licensing Regulations topic under the Popular Topics section of the National Child Care Information Center Web site at <a href="http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/definition-fcc.pdf">http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/definition-fcc.pdf</a>.</p>
Family, friend, and neighbor care	Child care that is provided by family, friends, and neighbors. It is also referred to as kith and kin care or as license-exempt care. In some cases, it may also be called informal care.*
Group home child care	Group home child care is two or more individuals who provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child, in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parents' work.*
Head Start and Early Head Start	<p>A comprehensive child development program that serves children from birth to age 5 years and their families. It is a child-focused program and has the overall goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. The Head Start program is administered by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All Head Start programs must adhere to Program Performance Standards.*</p> <p>With the reauthorization of the Head Start program in 1994, the U.S. Congress established a new program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women called Early Head Start. The Early Head Start program provides resources to community programs to address such needs and to achieve the purposes set forth by Congress.*</p>
Infant and toddler care	Child care for children from birth to age 3 years.
In home care	Child care that is provided in a child's home.
Licensing/licensed	Child care programs operated in homes or in facilities that fall within the regulatory system of a State, community, or Tribe and comply with those regulations. Some States may call their regulatory processes certification or registration.*
Nontraditional hours	Care provided to children at times outside of the traditional work day, e.g., during the hours between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., and between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.*
Nursery school	Programs designed for children who are ages 3–5 with early education experiences to prepare them for school. Programs are also referred to as preschool and/or prekindergarten programs.*
Part-day, part-year programs	Programs that occur for less than a full school day during the academic year.

Prekindergarten	Programs designed for children who are ages 3–5 years with early education experiences to prepare them for school. Programs are also referred to as preschool and/or nursery school programs.*
Preschool	Programs designed for children who are ages 3–5 years with early education experiences to prepare them for school. Programs are also referred to as prekindergarten and/or nursery school programs.*
School-age child care	Child care programs provided before and after school, during summers and on school holidays for children from kindergarten to age 13 years. Programs are also referred to as after-school child care.*

\*Source: Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2006). *Child Care and Development Fund report of state and territory plans, FY 2006-2007*. Washington, DC: Author.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.